THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR) : (a) to (d) Development of tourist places is a continuing process and is primarily undertaken by the State Governments/UT Administrations. However, Ministry of Tourism provides central financial assistance for tourism projects/schemes in consultation with the State Governments every year as per guidelines and availability of funds, During 1999-2000, a sum of Rs. 90.00 lakhs was sanctioned and Rs. 27.00 lakhs released as first instalment to Uttar Pradesh Government for construction of three Yatri Niwas in the State.

Projects for 2000-2001 have not yet been identified.

According Tourism the Status of Industry

†3950. SHRI ANANTRAY DEVSHANKER DAVE : Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Ministry has accepted the proposal of Commerce Ministry for granting the status of industry to Indian tourism;

(b) if so, whether some concrete steps have been taken on the suggestions of Commerce Ministry in this regard;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether Government have laid much emphasis on construction of five star hotels in the country in a planned manner; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR) : (a) At the request of Ministry of Tourism, 25 States have declared tourism as an industry and 3 States have declared hotels as an industry.

(b) and (c) Hotels, Travel agents, Tour operators, Tourist transport operators are entitled for recognition as Export House/Trading House/Star Trading House/Super Trading House etc. on the basis of their free foreign exchange earnings.

(d) and (e) Construction of hotels is mostly a private sector activity. However, Union Government extends fiscal incentives to prospective investors

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

and also provides Central financial assistance to State/UT Governments for construction of tourist accommodation based on the *inter-se* priority and availability of funds.

Erosion of Ganga and Padma in West Bengal

3951. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU : Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Government had set up an Export Group to study the erosion of the Ganga and Padma in Murshidabad and Nadia Districts of West Bengal;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the recommendations of the Export Group and the details thereof;

(c) the status of implementation in so far as the Union Government are concerned of these recommendations and the details thereof; and

(d) the reasons for non-implementation, if any?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) An Expert Committee was constituted in September, 1996 by Planning Commission to examine the bank erosion, problem of the river Ganga/Padma in West Bengal which submitted its report in December, 1996 recommending short term and long term measures, costing Rs. 315 crore and Rs. 612 crore respectively for tackling the erosion problem in various reaches lying upstream and downstream of the Farakka Barrage in the affected districts in West Bengal. The long and short term measures are prioritised and the schemes were allocated between the Centre and the Government of West Bengal based on their respective jurisdiction. The recommendations made by the Ganga River Erosion Committee (West Bengal) set up in 1978 and headed by Pritam Singh have been taken into consideration by the Expert Committee in their suggestions for remedial measures.

(c) and (d) A scheme of this Ministry for providing Central Assistance to Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal for anti-erosion measures along Ganga has been given "in principle" approval by the Planning Commission. This scheme includes critical anti-erosion works related to the recommendations of the Expert Committee.